

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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R 181041Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9606
AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
AMEMBASSY BERLIN
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMCONSUL MUNICH
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
AMEMBASSY SOVIA
USMISSION USBERLIN
USMISSION USNATO
AMEMBASSY WARSAW

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BUCHAREST 3363

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SHUM, PINT, RO
SUBJ: BAPTIST DISSIDENTS SPEAK OUT

1. SUMMARY. GROUP OF TEN BAPTIST DISSIDENTS UNDER LEADERSHIP OF PASTOR PAVEL NICULESCU HAVE DISTRIBUTED TWO HARD-HITTING DOCUMENTS ANNOUNCING FORMATION OF A COMMITTEE TO DEFEND RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN ROMANIA AND DEMANDING THAT GOR OFFICIALS AND DENOMINATION LEADERS "STOP THE PERSECUTION" OF CHRISTIANS. NO SPECIFIC EVENT SEEMS TO HAVE TRIGGERED THIS REACTION BUT RATHER A PERCEIVED CONTINUAL BUT GRADUAL TIGHTENING OF GOR RESTRICTIONS OF FREEDOM OF WORSHIP WHICH IS FELT MOST STRONGLY BY EVANGELICAL PROTESTANT GROUPS. ALTHOUGH DOCUMENTS COULD EASILY MAKE THEIR AUTHORS SUBJECT TO CRIMINAL PENALTIES UNDER ROMANIAN LAW, TO DATE NONE HAVE BEEN ARRESTED OR MISTREATED ALTHOUGH ALL ARE UNDER CONSTANT SURVEILLANCE
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AND FREQUENT QUESTIONING BY SECURITY FORCES. RELIGIOUS DISSNT IS A MORE DIFFICULT AND SERIOUS QUESTION FOR GOR TO DEAL WITH THAN LAST YEAR'S "INTELLECTUAL" DISSENT CENTERED AROUND PAUL GOMA. A LIKELY GOR OPTION IS QUIETLY TO EXPEL LEADERS OF GROUP, QUITE POSSIBLY TO UNITED STATES, AT MOMENT WHEN WESTERN ATTENTION IS FOCUSED ELSEWHERE. ISSUE OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN ROMANIA MAY ALSO BE RAISED

AS ANCILLARY ISSUE IN FORTHCOMING MFN HEARINGS. END SUMMARY.

2. FIRST DOCUMENT ANNOUNCES FORMATION OF A ROMANIAN CHRISTIAN COMMITTEE "FOR THE DEFENSE OF RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL FREEDOM (ALRC)" AND DESIRE OF THIS COMMITTEE TO AFFILIATE WITH "CHRISTIAN SOLIDARITY INTERNATIONAL" INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION FOR FREEDOM OF BELIEF" IN ZURICH. DOCUMENT IS SIGNED BY PAVEL NICOLESCU, DISSIDENT BAPTIST PASTOR; DIMITRIE IANCULOVICI, FORMER SECOND YEAR STUDENT AT BAPTIST SEMINARY EXPELLED FOR ALLEGEDLY SIDING WITH DISSIDENT ELEMENTS; AND EIGHT BAPTIST LAYMEN--JOHN MOLDOVAN, NICOLAE TRAIAN BOGDAN, PETRU COCIRTEU, EMERICH IUHASZ, NICOLAE RADOI, IOAN BRISC, LUDOVIC OSVATH, AND GENOVEVA SFATCU. FIRST TWO WERE NAMED AN OFFICIAL SPOKESMEN FOR THE GROUP.

3. IN PREAMBLE, DOCUMENT STATES DECISION HAD BEEN TAKEN TO FORM COMMITTEE BECAUSE OF: DESIRE TO ASSIST ALL CHRISTIANS IN ROMANIA WHO ARE PERSECUTED BECAUSE OF THEIR BELIEF IN GOD; FAILURE OF OFFICIAL LEADERS TO DEFEND INTERESTS OF THE DENOMINATIONS; EVER MORE SUBTLE AND REPRESSIVE TACTICS BY GOR'S DEPARTMENT OF CULTS WHICH HAVE CONVERTED OFFICIAL LEADERS INTO ITS DOCILE INSTRUMENTS; CONVICTION THAT RELIGION IN ROMANIA IS NOT "THE OPIATE OF THE PEOPLE" BUT IS AN AFFIRMATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND DIGNITY; AND BELIEF THAT COMMITTEE'S WORK WILL HELP BOTH THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH AND ROMANIA. WORK OF COMMITTEE, DOCUMENT NOTES, IS IN CONFORMITY WITH CONFIDENTIAL

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PROVISIONS OF ROMANIAN CONSTITUTION, UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS, INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION ON CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS, AND FINAL ACT OF HELSINKI.

4. SIX AREAS OF COMMITTEE ACTIVITY ARE: QUOTE

--TO AFFIRM THE MORAL AND SPIRITUAL VALUES OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

--TO DEFEND RELIGIOUS LIBERTY AND FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE.

--TO DEFEND AND ASSIST ALL THOSE WHO ARE PERSECUTED BECAUSE OF THEIR RELIGIOUS CONVICTIONS.

--TO PROMOTE INTER-CONFESSIONAL LINKS AMONG CHRISTIANS IN ROMANIA AND THOSE ABROAD.

--TO INFORM PUBLIC OPINION IN ROMANIA AND ABROAD ABOUT RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION IN ROMANIA.

--TO ANALYZE THE PHENOMENON OF RELIGION IN THE CONTEXT OF SOCIALIST SOCIETY. UNQUOTE.

5. SECOND DOCUMENT IS STRONGLY WORDED AND HARXD-HITTING CALL TO ROMANIAN GOVERNMENT AND PARTY OFFICIALS, DEPARTMENT OF CULTS, REPRESENTATIVES OF JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND POLICE/SECURITY FORCES, AND OFFICIAL LEADERS OF BAPTIST DENOMINATION TO "STOP THE PERSECUTION", PHRASE WHICH IS TITLE OF DOCUMENT AND RECURS SIXTEEN TIMES IN IT. IN NON-AMBIGUOUS TERMS, DOCUMENT ACCUSES GOR OF SYSTEMATICALLY VIOLATING INTERNAL LAWS AND EXTERNAL AGREEMENTS WHICH GUARANTEE FREEDOM OF WORSHIP; ALLEGES SERIOUS JOB, EDUCATIONAL, AND OTHER DISCRIMINATION IS PRACTICED AGAINST CHRISTAINS; CHARGES DEPARTMENT OF CULTS WITH PERVERTING ITS MISSION OF PROTECTING RELIGIOUS FREEDOM INTO ONE OF REPRESSING IT; CLAIMS THAT POLICE/SECURITY FORCES HAVE CONFIDENTIAL

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HARASSED, BEATEN, INSULTED, AND OTHERWISE PERSECUTED PERSONS WHOSE ONLY "CRIME" IS BEING A CONFESSING CHRISTIAN; AND CONDEMS OFFICIAL BAPTIST LEADERS FOR FAILING TO PROTEST GOR MEASURES DETRIMENTAL TO DENOMINATION AND ITS MEMBERS. DOCUMENT CONCLUDES WITH RINGING CALL TO ALL ROMANIANS TO JOIN TOGETHER TO PROTECT "ALL FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS OF MAN" AND ESPECIALLY TO END RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION IN ROMANIA.

6. BOTH DOCUMENTS ARE DATED APRIL 2, BUT THEY HAVE ONLY RECENTLY SURFACED. ALLEGEDLY, BOTH DOCUMENTS WERE READ ON RFE ON OR ABOUT MAY 14 (FOR MUNICH: CAN YOU CONFIRM?)

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00
PA-01 ICA-11 SP-02 HA-05 IO-13 /055 W
-----031970 190642Z /11
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FM AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
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AMEMBASSY SOFIA
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USMISSION USNATO
AMEMBASSY WARSAW

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BUCHAREST 3363

COMMITTEE IS ALSO TRYING TO SMUGGLE OUT ADDITIONAL COPIES TO SUCH ADDRESSES AS KESTON COLLEGE IN ENGLAND AND CHRISTIAN SOLIDARITY INTERNATIONAL IN ZURICH; EMBASSY HAS RECEIVED COPIES ADDRESSED TO US CSCE COMMISSION.

7. COMMENT. AUTHOR OF DOCUMENTS AND MOVING SPIRIT OF COMMITTEE IS NICULESCU WHO DEVOUTLY BELIEVES THAT GOR IS CONSCIOUSLY AND RATHER BRUTALLY ATTEMPTING TO DESTROY ORGANIZED RELIGION IN ROMANIA AND PERSECUTING ITS ADHERENTS. OTHER ROMANIANS WE HAVE TALKED WITH TEND TO AGREE THAT IN SOME RESPECTS THERE HAS BEEN A TIGHTENING OF RESTRICTIONS ON RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS IN THE LAST YEAR AND THAT NEO-PROTESTANT GROUPS SEEM TO FEEL THESE RESTRICTIONS MOST STRONGLY, BUT THEY DO NOT DESCRIBE THE SITUATION IN SUCH STARK TERMS AS TWO ALRC DOCUMENTS)

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8. THERE IS NO DOUBT IN OUR MINDS NOR IN THOSE OF ROMANIANS FAMILIAR WITH ABOVE DOCUMENTS THAT AUTHORIS AND SIGNATORS ARE PUNISHABLE UNDER ROMANIAN PENAL LAW PROVISIONS DEALING WITH INTERNAL SECURITY AND INCITING TO SUBVERSION, AS WELL AS UNAUTHORIZED CONTACTS ABROAD. YET, TO DATE, NONE OF TEN HAS BEEN ARRESTED ALTHOUGH ALL ARE UNDER CLOSE SURVEILLANCE BY SECURITY FORCES AND SEVERAL HAVE BEEN REPEATEDLY QUESTIONED. NONE HAS BEEN PHYSICALLY MISTREATED.

9. NEVERTHELESS, AS WE HAVE PREVIOUSLY REPORTED, RELIGIOUS DISSENT IS A MUCH MORE SERIOUS QUESTION FOR GOR THAN LAST YEAR'S SO-CALLED INTELLECTUAL DISSENT WHICH FOCUSED AROUND PERSON OF PAUL GOMA. WITH A FEW EXCEPTIONS, GOR FOUND IT RELATIVELY EASY TO BUY OFF, UNDERCUT, AND OUT-MANEUVER THE INTELLECTUALS, WHEREAS PERSONS SUCH AS NICULESCU ARE MUCH HARDER TO DEAL WITH AND MUCH LESS SUSCEPTIBLE TO GOR CAJOLERY. GIVEN PRECEDENT OF GOMA WHO WAS EASED OUT OF ROMANIA BY GOR AFTER WESTERN PRESS INTEREST IN HIM DWINDLED. ONE LIKELY COURSE OF ACTION FOR GOR TO TAKE WOULD BE TO EXPEL NICULESCU AND HANDFUL OF OTHER PROMINENT NEO-PROTESTANT DISSIDENTS SUCH AS IOSIF TON AND AUREL POPESCU, THEREBY

LEAVING DISSIDENTS RELIGIOUS GROUPS AT LEAST TEMPORARILY LEADERLESS. SEVERAL INCLUDING NICULESCU HAVE ALREADY BEEN FORCED TO FILL OUT PASSPORT APPLICATION FORMS, PRESUMABLY FOR USE AT SOME APPROPRIATE FUTURE DATE. AS ADDITIONAL FILLIP, PASSPORTS IF ISSUED WILL LIKELY BEAR EXIT VISAS FOR UNITED STATES, THEREBY NEATLY TOSSING BALL INTO OUR COURT.

10. AT SAME TIME, WE WOULD NOTE THAT TON PREACHED FULL WEEK IN MID-APRIL TO FULL HOUSES AT MAIN OFFICIAL BAPTIST CONGREGATION IN CENTRAL BUCHAREST WITHOUT INCIDENT AND ACCORDING TO VISITING AMERICAN PROFESSOR CONTINUES TO FILL OWN PARISH CHURCH IN WESTERN ROMANIA WITHOUT OVER OBSTRUCTION FROM CONFIDENTIAL

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AUTHORITIES EVEN THOUGH DEPARTMENT OF CULTS DEPUTY POPESCU TOLD DCM IN EARLY APRIL HE "UNDERSTOOD" TON HAD BEEN DEPRIVED OF RECOGNITION BY OFFICIAL BAPTISTS. REAL SITUATION ON GROUND MAY THEREFORE NOT BE AS CLEAR AS MANIFESTO CLAIMS.

11. IT IS ALSO POSSIBLE THAT QUESTION OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM MAY BE RAISED IN FORTHCOMING CONGRESSIONAL HEARINGS ON ROMANIAN MFN RENEWAL, ALTHOUGH ONLY AS TERTIARY POINT AFTER EMIGRATION PERFORMANCE AND SITUATION OF HUNGARIAN MINORITY. AGGREY

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Message Attributes

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Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 18 may 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
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Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
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Expiration:
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SAS ID: 2655555
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: BAPTIST DISSIDENTS SPEAK OUT
TAGS: SHUM, PINT, RO
To: STATE BELGRADE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/afd4309b-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
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